

The Whistle-Blower

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Inside Issues

Editor's Note	1
Rich in gold but no development	2
Miners abuse a reality	3
EPOs the root cause of corruption	4
Fortification of mines in Mat South raises questions	5
Artisanal Small Scale Miners voice their concern over the Tributary Agreement Act	6

Editor's Note

Dear Reader

Welcome to our February edition of our newsletter, I hope you enjoyed and you were touched by the January edition.

Our cause remains the same, fighting corruption and we hope that through this edition you will get to understand the challenges faced by miners and the problems associated with mining in general.

It is sad that our Province (Matabeleland South) has been the leading producer in terms of gold but remains poor and under developed. All this requires an active citizenry that will actively engage with all stakeholders and demand its share of the natural resources bountiful in our province.

Another issue of concern is the unfair distribution of our minerals land through EPOs which means these natural riches are in the hands of a few elite. These resources should benefit the communities at large at this calls for actions by every community member

in demanding transparency on the distribution and use of these resources.

As young people, it is our role to spearhead these advocacy actions in our communities so as to shape the future. Where ever we are as we meet, we need to have conversations on these issues, share knowledge and ideas and think about possible actions we can take to address corruption in our communities.

If you are a young person and also a miner, *The Whistleblower* is your space as we cover news affecting miners. Feel free to contact us and share the news and experiences you encounter and help us tell your story.

I hope you will find this edition informative as always, and be motivated to take action against corruption.

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Rich in gold but no development

●Gwanda Youths lament lack of development

Gwanda youths have expressed their anger and disappointment towards the lack of progress and development in Gwanda despite the Matabeleland South Province town having precious resources.

The youths lamented the fact that Gwanda and other locations in Matabeleland South are experiencing low economic growth despite being rich in mineral resources such as gold. According to the Ministry of Mines and mining development, Matabeleland South province has 6711 registered mining claims in the province and of these 5772 is registered for gold and 989 are registered as base metal claims.

Speaking to Community Youth Development Trust (CYDT), Sinthando Moyo, a youth from Gwanda said it is shocking that Matabeleland South province is said to be the number one gold producing province in Zimbabwe for years but has nothing to show for it in terms of development

“I once read online that for over five years Matabeleland Province has been the number one province producing gold. How’s that even possible, I mean Gwanda should be a great and big city already just like Harare and Bulawayo. What is the benefit of having mines in Gwanda when the gold that is being extracted is developing other places other than Matabeleland South Province?”, Said Moyo.

“These are some of the things that as residents of Gwanda have taken for granted. What is the vision of Gwanda after five to ten years from now? Our leaders and the authorities need to sit down and discuss how to improve our province, how to utilise our resources and design or formulate strategies for the development of Gwanda and the province as a whole.

Why can’t our leaders or the council set up goals such as Gwanda Vision 2025; set up goals to be met by 2025. This will at least



reflect the progress Gwanda is having,” she lamented.

The youths also cited the lack of transparency in the mining sector as the problem behind Gwanda not benefiting from its precious stones and supported accountability tools that will improve the mining production transparency to Gwanda people.

According to Newsday (18 February, 2020) Gwanda residents were clear that transparency matters to them because the gold being mined was owned by the communities and they wanted to know the details of how much gold was extracted, value realised, royalties, taxes and levies paid. They also wanted to know what was received by various government institutions and how the mining revenue was spent since it impacts on community development.

“For fair mining deals in the mining industry fundamental issues of transparency and accountability need to be dealt with as soon as possible. It is important for us

to know the amount of gold that is being extracted in Gwanda; be aware of the whole production process of gold. Many people don’t know the process.

They just know that gold is extracted here in Gwanda and sold in Harare. People don’t know what is happening then you ask yourself how is Gwanda going to develop if the process is taking place like this,” said another youth who refused to say his name for safety reasons.

“We should understand the terms and conditions for mining agreements so we can understand the deals signed if they play a part in the development of Gwanda. All deals must be Gwanda friendly,” he added.

Transparency is one of the major pillars of community development and therefore it is important for the mining industry to engages communities in all processes. Community participation will not only promote transparency and accountability but also lead to community centred development interventions.

Miners Abuse a Reality



With all the human rights organisations and activists extensively campaigning for the fair treatment of all Zimbabwean citizens with miners being no exception on the list. It is of high concern that, there are still employers who still beat up employees.

There were widespread reports of regular and escalating violations of human rights in Zimbabwe under the regime of Robert Mugabe which ruled with heavy hand on its citizens, it is sad to note that cases of human rights violations still exist in the new dispensation.

Well, the unthinkable, absurd practice seems to be a reality in Matobo where mine workers are accusing their employers of ruthlessly abusing them. The miners are allegedly accusing their Yakutsi Investments mining firm bosses in Matobo of beating them and paying them what is less than the hours they are working.

“Our time here is not good, we suffer everyday and we are not allowed to complain as these guys can beat you up with no remorse. We work long hours but we are not paid in full. It’s high time that our working conditions are looked at and improved by the mining ministry,” said one worker who requested anonymity for security reasons.

“It’s true what is being said by other workers; miners are treated as slaves. Despite the hard work we do here, our services are undermined as we are paid less than what we expect. Coming out to publicise our grievances will only result to our dismal and that we don’t want. So it is better we just keep quiet or don’t reveal our names,” another worker said.

According to the Newsday article published on the 11th of February 2020 the workers have reported the matter to the National Union of Mines, Quarry, Iron and Steel Workers of Zimbabwe in which the organisation confirmed that they had received complaints from mine workers and noted that the matter was being processed to be taken to court.

The accused Yakutsi Mining official denied these allegations and claimed that the workers are the ones who are stealing from the company, and invited members of the press to tour the company premises.

The rights of workers is something that should not be taken for granted by employers, it not only dehumanising but also an abuse of one’s human rights and the mining ministry needs to take serious action and treat the subject with agency.

EPOs are the Root Cause Of Corruption



The dispute around Exclusive Prospecting Orders (EPOs) has been in public domain for some time now with many small-scale and artisanal miners determined that EPOs are a malice that needs to be dealt with to allow the growth of the mining sector in Zimbabwe.

An EPO is a large area of ground targeted for the selected minerals for exploration. It is without doubt that the EPOs are relevant for the development of the mining industry if not mired by corruption which the sector has been accused of countless times.

The advantages of these EPOs are to a greater extent over shadowed by the disadvantages they come with especially to the artisanal and small miners who are more affected by their operations due to the EPOs.

“The problem in Zimbabwe is corruption and not the initiatives that are put forward. Geologists and mining experts sets up strategies, well planned mining programs and initiatives, however, these bril-

liant ideas succumb to corruption”, said Memory Ngwenya.

“I like the fact that EPOs gives miners the power to approve and disapprove EPOs if they suspect fault play for instance if the EPO is not signed. This is the transparency that we need in the mining industry for miners to account for things they suspect are corruption related. The ability to question authorities on some of the activities that requires clarifications is healthy for the mining industry,” one youth said during a anti corruption meeting conducted by Community Development Trust

At a time when the country is facing sharp economic decline and mining is one of the few strategies towards the stabilization of the economy, it is imperative and significant that proper functional processes are granted to favour both small and large scale miners.

According to the December issue of the mining Zimbabwe magazine most miners are of the view that EPOs are a good initi-

ative but have been shadowed by vast corruption activities.

“No one is fighting EPOs, but artisanal small-scale miners and other stakeholders are only against the manner in which these EPOs have been blanketed across all mining provinces in Zimbabwe.

It is in the manner they have been carpeted disadvantaging artisanal small-scale miners and other stakeholders thus a thorn in the flesh. We need coexistence of both large- and small-scale miners and preclusion of certain areas throughout all mining provinces for free participation of artisanal small-scale miners and other stakeholders to prospect and peg with no restrictions from the blanketed or carpeted EPOs”, said Ngwenya.

There is need for the government to monitor EPOs processes because if it fails to do so that is when corruption starts. There are people who can use that allocated area for other purposes rather than exploring minerals.

Fortification of Mine Claims in Matabeleland South Raises Questions

The current fortification of mine claims especially in Matabeleland South has left many heads turning and a lot of unanswered questions. The numbers of fortified mines keeps increasing and the miners are left in despair.

CYDT held a stakeholder meeting in Maphisa where artisanal and small scale miners together with stakeholders set to deliberate on the challenges faced in the small scale mining sector and chief among those was the recent fortification of mining claims in Matabeleland South by the ministry of mines.

The government recently fortified over a 1500 mine claims in Matabeleland South under the new act of the “use it or lose it policy” and failure by miners to submit returns, pay inspection and operating fees. Miners complained that they not notified prior to the forfeiture of their claims.

“it would only be fair that the government gives us a warning that alerts us that we are in arrears and our mines will be forfeited in a certain period, than to go to pay your licence fees only to be told that your mining claim has been forfeited”, expressed one miner from Maphisa on condition of anonymity.

The miners also lamented on the unfairness of the revocation period allocated to address their arrears. They argue that the period is too short to address their problems. “21 days is a short period of time to raise \$1000 dollars including the money one will be owing, we wish the government would increase the revocation period so that we would be able to secure our mines as it is our only source of livelihood” lamented another miner.

The forfeiture of mines has closed out the operational space for artisanal and small scale miners hence affecting the



livelihoods of many families who are dependent on the sector for survival. Some mines have been reportedly taken over by CIOs in Maphisa which is then clearly a consortium with the CIOs under the “use it or lose it” policy

Some miners questioned if this recent seizure of mines in the Province is another form of land reform, looking at the rate miners are losing their mines to new owners who happen to be from other provinces. Miners worry about their local development with the coming in of new owners who will take the benefits of their gold proceeds to develop their places of origin.

One miner questioned the role of chiefs in allowing the repossession of mines that have a bearing on local development.

“We are left with so many questions as to why the chiefs allow these new mine owners who do not belong to the province to own local resource that are supposed to benefit the local community? We suspect there is a higher power behind the seizure and fortification of mines and probably all this is politically motivated.” expressed another miner during the meeting.

How is then Zimbabwe open for business yet it closes doors to local people miners?

Artisanal Small Scale Miners Voice Their Concern Over the Tributary Agreement Act



Once again, probably not for the last time, the plight of artisanal small scale miners is in the limelight after a series of shocking reported cases of the mistreatment of miners across the country.

There are growing calls and reports about how the miners work long hours but come pay day, they are under paid while some workers claim they go for three months without payments. Workers have now voiced their concern over the Tributary Agreement act role in the mistreatment of artisanal miners.

The tributary agreement which can be understood as a licence to work on tribute is a system in which a miner called a tributer takes over the working of a mine in consideration of paying or receiving a proportion of the produce or of its equivalent value or sometimes the owners of the mine return to the tributer a proportion of the ore as payment of his or her labour.

According to the artisanal miners authorities have allegedly denied them the chance to become tributers. The miners

believe that the designing of the tributary agreement only benefits the owners and the tributers; mine owners and tributers reap all the benefits of the tributary agreement by denying artisanal miners their salaries after completing their mining activities and selling the gold.

Another stumbling block in the tributary agreement is that there is no clause that addresses the share of the workers and the 5% for tributers is not followed with the tributers taking a larger percentage at the end of the day.

“We suffer at the hands of the mine owners, at times we go up to three months without any salaries, the tributary agreement only covers the mine owners and the one in whom the land is being tributed to. We are the ones who suffer unfair treatments and little or delayed salaries yet we are the ones who do all the work” lamented one mine worker in uMzingwane.

The only percent that is indicated on the tributary agreement is the one that states that the owner of the mine gets five per-

cent of the proceeds which at the end of the day does not cater for the workers who actual extracts the minerals. The miners feel that these mine owners now hide behind the tributary agreement when it comes to them being paid for their work.

It is worth mentioning that in a time the country’s economic status is in shambles with the government currently in an economic fiasco, mining is one of the remaining sources of employment providing a lifeline for majority of the youths in Zimbabwe.

Therefore it’s damning that they are allegedly being used by their employers and paid nuts at the end of the day or nothing at all. It’s unthinkable and preposterous to think that there are people who still bring back the colonial oriented relationship between the workers and the employers.

Government needs to investigate and bring perpetrators to book.